

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

19 April 1985

The Indo-Pakistani Military Balance [REDACTED]

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Summary

India enjoys overwhelming superiority over Pakistan in troops strength, weapons and equipment, command, control, and communications, and large scale military-industrial infrastructure. Moreover, the gap is growing. India could quickly achieve complete air superiority and establish an effective blockade of Pakistan's only major port, Karachi, eliminating Pakistan's Navy as a viable fighting force. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Indian combined arms operations would be likely to succeed in soundly defeating Pakistan's ground forces within two weeks after the opening of hostilities. Any further Pakistani resistance would probably be limited to small scale, independent operations by isolated regular units and irregular forces. [REDACTED]

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This memorandum was prepared by [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Information as of 17 April 1985 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief, South Asia Division, NESAD, [REDACTED]

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The Indo-Pakistani Military Balance [REDACTED]

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Ground Forces

The Indian Army has a marked advantage in numbers of men and arms over the Pakistani Army. Indian officers, however, are widely viewed as being more indecisive and inflexible than those of Pakistan. [REDACTED]

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India. Fourteen of India's 32 divisions and 12 of its independent combat brigades are deployed directly opposite Pakistan. In addition, India has seven divisions in reserve for operations against Pakistan, although three of them are now in the Punjab on internal security duty. [REDACTED]

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Pakistan. Islamabad has 14 of its 18 divisions, and all four of its independent armored brigades deployed against India. Most of these forces are concentrated in Azad-Kashmir and northern Punjab. The Pakistan Army is weakest in southern Punjab and Sind, where vital transportation lines would be vulnerable to attack and interdiction once India completes its military buildup in neighboring Rajasthan in the next few years. [REDACTED]

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Air Forces

New Delhi has a large and, with the exception of Pakistan's F-16s, a more modern air force. Both sides suffer from severe maintenance problems that would quickly reduce their effectiveness during a war. [REDACTED]

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India. Twenty-five of India's 37 frontline squadrons are located opposite Pakistan. Until India begins receiving French Mirage 2000s later this year, it will have nothing comparable to Pakistan's F-16s. [REDACTED]

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Pakistan. Pakistan has 18 combat squadrons, 14 of which are located opposite India. So far, 28 of the 40 F-16s have been delivered. They are based at Sargodha, about 120 miles south of Islamabad. Otherwise, the Pakistani Air Force is equipped largely with aging, short range, Chinese-made MIG-19s and smaller numbers of more modern French Mirages. [REDACTED]

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Naval Forces

India. India has three times as many warships as Pakistan and the margin of superiority will grow as New Delhi is expected to take delivery of 22 more before the end of the decade. India also has a large naval arm and recently purchased British Sea Eagle antiship missiles and Soviet TU-142 Bear ASW aircraft. [REDACTED]

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Pakistan. Pakistan's small outdated navy probably could not prevent an Indian blockade of its only major port, Karachi, and would quickly be trapped in port or destroyed at sea in wartime. Pakistan plans to supplement its small inventory of Exocet antiship missiles with ship and sub-launched Harpoons. [REDACTED]

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The Threat to India

Indian leaders maintain that a rough balance of forces exists along the Indo-Pakistani border, but [redacted] Pakistan is capable of quickly seizing sections of Indian territory. The Indians expect the Pakistanis would then call for a ceasefire. Indians point to their need to use a sizeable portion of their forces elsewhere.

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- India has six mountain divisions, two infantry divisions, and one reinforced mountain brigade--some 130,000 men--stationed across the border from China. Beijing maintains three infantry divisions, an artillery regiment, and scattered border forces in Tibet--approximately 40,000 men--that could be reinforced with seven divisions within a month.
- India has four more mountain divisions and an infantry division deployed in the northeast. New Delhi has quietly created a new army corps in the region drawing on command assets from the Indo-Pak border. Local guerrillas killed more than 150 security personnel and civilians last year, and the situation is worsening.
- Indian army officers have complained that the frequent and recurrent use of the army to combat civil violence has disrupted training and weakened army readiness. We estimate that about 20,000 additional regular army troops have been deployed in the Punjab since last summer to deter Sikh insurgents. Most recently, army forces were called out in Ahmadabad to suppress student riots.

The Indians also maintain that Pakistan has access to US intelligence in the region and have often noted that some US arms sales to Pakistan, such as the Harpoons, are aimed at India, rather than Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

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Our Assessment

Pakistan's armed forces are too weak and poorly armed to launch a major offensive into India. We believe that Pakistan would attempt to seize Indian territory only to pre-empt an anticipated Indian attack and to gain leverage in subsequent negotiations.

- Its army lacks mobility and much of its equipment is in poor repair.
- The Air Force has only limited ability to threaten most strategic targets in India--even with its F-16s--and cannot provide effective close air support for the Army.
- Its air defense system is not capable of defending its cities or strategic industrial or military targets.
- Pakistan does not have the kind of advanced command-and-control system needed to operate modern weapons and to coordinate complex military operations.

-- The armed forces get little training in complex tactical situations or in coordinating ground, air, and sea operations.

-- The wartime logistics infrastructure is in poor condition. [REDACTED]

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Islamabad's defense strategy calls for containing an Indian attack long enough for international action to end the fighting before Pakistan suffered a catastrophic defeat. Pakistan's highest priority would be to prevent a rapid Indian breakthrough and avoid sizeable territorial losses in order to maintain a credible military position in negotiations on a ceasefire and disengagement of forces. We believe China would provide Pakistan with arms and might instigate border incidents to demonstrate its concern. [REDACTED]

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We believe that Indian forces would be able to defend Indian territory against a Pakistani attack, even with security problems elsewhere in India. If the war lasted more than two weeks, India would be able to mobilize additional forces along its western front and decisively defeat Pakistan. We believe, however, that India has only an even chance of executing an adequately prepared, well planned attack with enough flexibility and ingenuity in tactical field leadership to defeat Pakistan in much less than two weeks. [REDACTED]

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Implications of US and Soviet Military Aid

Pakistan's use of modern US arms would raise the cost of victory for India and make a quick and decisive penetration of Pakistani defenses more difficult. It would not, however, enable Pakistan to achieve a military stalemate except if the war were ended by diplomatic intervention before the Indian military could take advantage of its greater size and resources. [REDACTED]

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Soviet military assistance in the next few years will enable India to create the additional armored and mechanized forces it needs to attain a quick and decisive victory over Pakistan. Continued license production of MIG-27s and the potential purchase of MIG-29s will help the Air Force to neutralize Islamabad's F-16s and threaten a larger number of strategic targets in Pakistan. The Navy, meanwhile, is scheduled to receive Kilo class submarines and Kresta class ASW cruisers that should, in combination with existing ASW assets, help to neutralize Pakistan's submarines. [REDACTED]

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SUBJECT: The Indo-Pakistani Military Balance

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